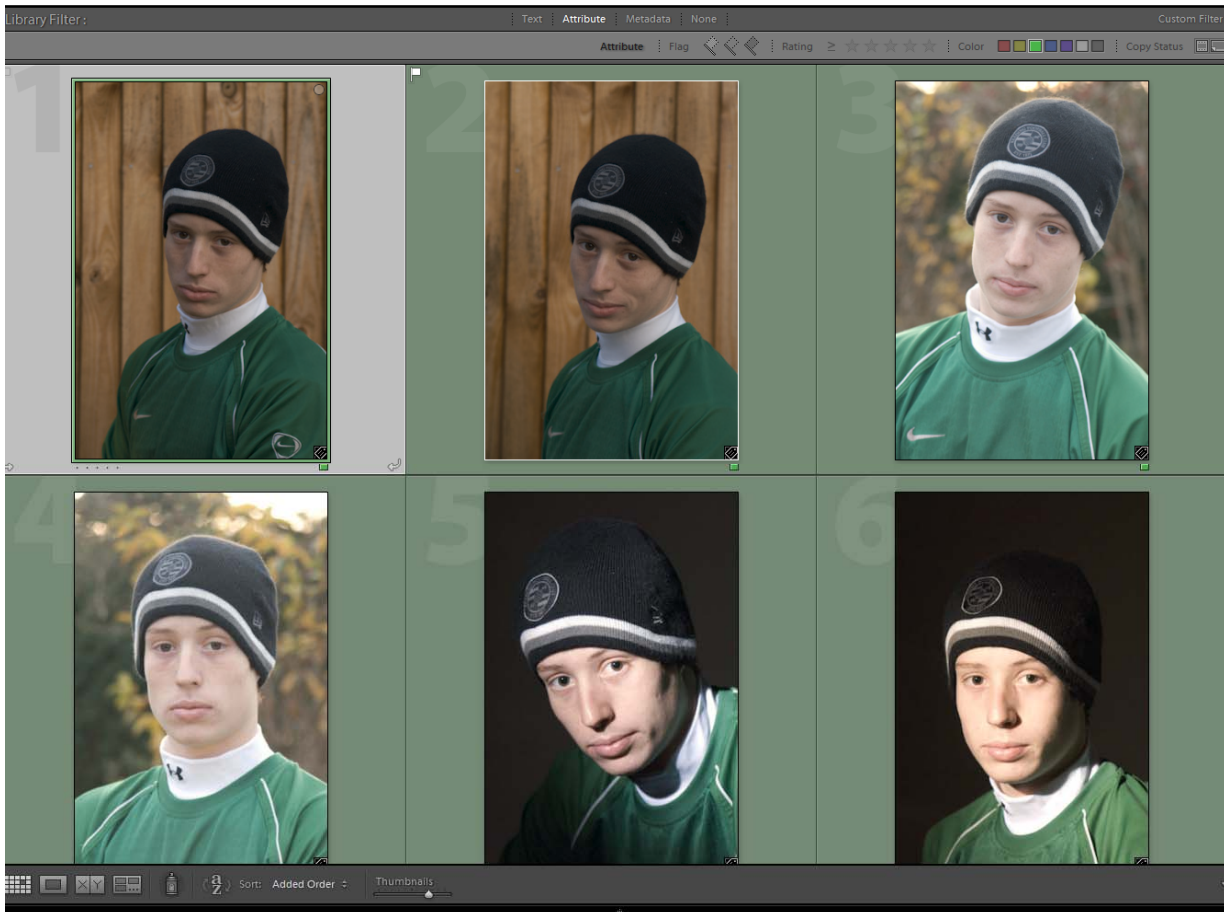


PROJECT 3: Experimenting with light.

The brief for this exercise was to take 5 to six images with different lighting situations, natural light where possible and only take studio lighting if you have it for a maximum of two of the images. Here you can see all six taken and all images have different lighting techniques. The first two are in direct sunlight. The second two are in to the light with the sun behind the subject and the final two are with studio lighting.



The first image is with direct sunlight at 45 degrees over the right shoulder. The sun is low and is almost over the horizon in the evening time. It is winter to and the colour temperature is cool giving a subtle orange glow to the light.

The next image taken with the same natural light and in the same position has a gold umbrella added which is to his right, it gives a little more glow to his face emphasising subtly the warm glow of the evening sun.

The next two images are taken with the Sun behind the subject. The Sun, however, is below the horizon therefore it is not throwing direct light at the back of the subject but reflected from the light cloud. The first of these images is straight with no additional reflectors' added. The second image has two white reflecting photographic umbrellas in front of the subject. You can not see it but the subject is holding both. The umbrellas and lower then his chest and angled up towards his face, hence under his chin the light has been lifted reducing the shadow.

The final two photographs are taken with flashguns in a studio set up.

The first of the two images is taken with a Nikon SB800 flash directed straight at the subject. The front of the flash has a snoot attached narrowing the spill of the light from the flash. It is positioned at 45 degrees to the subject to his left and the catch light can be seen in his eyes in the ten o'clock position.

The light is cold and very white; the direct lighting also causes harsh and deep shadows that in some portraits would be unforgiving. A portrait of a young lady where a softer glow to the skin would be preferred is an example of where this lighting would not be appropriate.

The final image in the studio is using the same flash, but this time turned around and fired into a gold reflecting umbrella. You can see the warmth this has added to the lighting as his skin tone has become more bronzed. The shadows have been softened a little and this has helped reduce the harshness of direct lighting.

Direct lighting has its place and would be suitable if you wanted to emphasis detail, however, that may or may not be a portrait but an image where the detail is important.

Comparing all these images you can see how any natural light or flash can be effectively controlled to how the photographer needs it. Times of the day will affect the portraits and direct sunlight could become a problem if you wanted soft rather than harsh shadow. You can see that demonstrated by the direct flash image above as a man made equivalent.

Controlling the light by positioning the subject in shadow rather than direct light can have its added advantages. You can move your subject around 360 degrees and watch more easily how the light is falling on the face and features of your portrait. The resulting images have more detail in the highlight areas as direct light tends to burn these out. You also have more detail in the shadow areas of the portrait, as the reflected light lifts the levels in these areas again, revealing more detail.

There is a lot the photographer can do to alter and correct areas of the lighting with different reflective surfaces. As above with the gold umbrella this has bronzed the skin tone. Other effects can be achieved with white or silver reflective surfaces. With silvered the reflection is more like direct lighting, which stands to reason as the light is less diffused as it bounces back to the subject. White and rougher surfaces diffuse the light and seemingly reduce the intensity of the light that reflects back on to the subject.

Painted walls, different surfaces with and without texture in the street can all be used. Brick walls can reflect warm light and can be used with a portrait posing adroit to a surface such as this. Snow gives a mass of diffused soft light and can be used to lift shadow areas of a portrait.

From colour temperature of light through to direct and reflective illumination all can be used to model the light available for a subject. Furthermore with the addition of photographic flash lights and the possibilities these now offer lighting can be blended to give results with balanced fill flash or even direct flash with sunlight behind to give a 'rim light' effect on the back of a subject. Here the light illuminates the edges of a portrait from behind giving a halo or bright lining to the subject.

There are many possibilities and with practice looking for these lighting opportunities it obviously pays off, so that a photographer can learn to see the effects of light.

Contextual Portrait.

For these images I have used my son studying for his school exams sitting in our kitchen.

I took a number of images varying the aperture and shutter speed. I used a wider angle lens and close in to the table, this has allowed me to include the books, computer, stationary and calculator to tell more of the story.

After evaluating the initial images which were taken at F20 (for a large depth of field) at with a slow shutter speed which risked movement blur, I felt that the images needed less emphasis on the surrounding near objects because their importance was less than the portrait itself. You can see here below that the calculator draws a lot of attention from the main subject. I also don't like the subjects hand in front of his face. So I waited until he changed his sitting position. Just naturally letting him move, there was no positioning by me.



Having assessed this I widened the aperture to reduce the prominence of the calculator.



The focus due to the reduced depth of field improves things slightly. The calculator and the pen and writing in the books still tells more of the story, but with less dominance.

The pose was still not right so I waited for his position to change I also felt that if I could reduce the prominence of the calculator a little more that would also be helpful. Therefore I decided to put warm breath on the front of the lens to add a little blur and then take a series of shots until it disappeared. The following was the result and I feel completes the image well.

